10. Message of the Vedas

The essence of all the Vedas and Sastras

Can be summed up in one sentence:

The Atma that resides in all beings

And in you is one only.

Seeking liberation, man adores

Crores of deities in the three worlds.

Of what avail is it? The bondage remains.

If he can shed the ego in him,

He needs no liberation. Liberation is his.

THE *Vedas,* which are limitless and which were revealed as illuminations of the Eternal Truth to the *Rishis,* were codified and presented in three collections of hymns by the sage Vyasa for the benefit of humanity. They are: *Rig, Yajur and Sama Veda. The Vedas* together with the *Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads--provide* the guidelines for the proper conduct of the four *Ashramas* (stages) in life---*Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa.* In addition, they serve also as essential guides in the pursuit of the four *Purusharthas* (the basic goals of human *life)---Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha* (Righteousness, Material well-being, Desire of realisation and Liberation).

Bharatiya culture and tradition is based on the authority and message of the *Vedas. Veda* means that which demonstrates the Divine principle. The *Veda* permeates the universe. It is the embodiment of Truth.

It flows in eight streams: *Sabdabrahmamayee* (manifesting as all-pervading Cosmic sound); *Charaacharamayee* (pervading all moving and unmoving objects); *jyotrimayee* (all-pervading effulgence); *Vaangmayee* (sacred speech); *Nityanandamayee* (eternal-biiss); *Paraatparamayee* (embodiment of the Omniwill); *Mayamayee* (manifestation of *Maga)* and Srimay*ee* (the embodiment of all prosperity).

The Purusharthas

In all these different ways, the *Vedas,* have served to promote the well-being of mankind. The *Vedas,* however, have been regarded as the lower knowledge - *Apara Vidya - as* distinguished from Para *Vidya* (Knowledge of the Absolute). *Vedic* ritualism was regarded as helpful for dealing with worldly concerns, but not of much use with regard to the understanding of the transcendental. The *Vedas* were useful for achieving mundane and heavenly pleasures and overcoming pain and giving encouragement and support

in the pursuit of such objectives. Their main concern was with the first three *Purusharthas--Dharma, Artha* and *Kama. Moksha* (spiritual liberation) could be attained only through *jnana* (as distinct from rituals and *Yajnas* performed with *Vedic mantras).* The higher wisdom can be won, not through rituals, wealth or progeny, but only through sacrifice or renunciation.

Opponents to be overcome in spiritual life

All the disciplines or practices *(sadhana)* practised now relate to worldly interests, motivated by selfish desires. The spiritual goal transcends these worldly objects. It is beyond reason and the bounds set by the sacred texts. It is the concept of *Moksha. "Mohakshayam = Moksham"--the* elimination of *moha* (delusion) is *Moksha.* The concept of *Moksha* is related to the concept of *Parama Prema* (Love for the Supreme).

In the process of realising this state of Supreme Love, several opponents have to be overcome. Foremost among these are the six *"enemies"--Kama* (passion), *Krodha* (hatred), *Lobha* (greed), *Moha* (delusion), *Mada* (pride), *Maatsaryam* (envy). If one manages to overcome these six enemies, he is confronted with eight forms of pride, which stand in the way of his spiritual progress. Among these are pride of wealth, of physical strength, youth, beauty, scholarship, power or penance. These different forms of pride lead man away from his real goal. Modern man is filled with one or other of these forms of pride.

So, the first requisite for man is the shedding of pride. A man without riches poses as a millionaire. One without learning poses as a scholar. And a miserable weakling struts about like Kingkong (a champion wrestler). What is the basis for this pride? How long can it last? The wielder of power may lose it the next day. Puffed up with pride of wealth or position, .men forget their inner divinity. They are relying on things which are essentially transient and impermanent. A bird swaying on the branch of a tree has no fear because it relies for its safety not on the branch but on its wings. Man, on the contrary, has no confidence in his own inner Self. He is dependent on others. He is ready to abuse himself for the sake of position or office. The basic reason for this lamentable predicament is the ill-conceived craving for undesirable things.

Realise the joy in giving than possessing

Man's desires are limitless. Man is attached to things none of which will accompany him when he dies. He should realise that there is greater joy in giving, than in possession and accumulation. Renouncing is as essential as acquiring. If there is no exhalation of breath in the wake of inhalation, man will not able to survive.

It is the attachment to property or position born out of sense of possessiveness that is the cause of man's sorrow and unhappiness. Man must strive to get rid of this feeling of "I" and "mine" to experience enduring happiness. When everything appears to be going well, man forgets everything including himself. His ego gets inflated as a result of his achievements and acquisitions. He should realise that he is only a temporary beneficiary of what he possesses and has no permanent title to any of them. He should regard power or position as a moral assignment carrying the obligation to discharge the duties relating to it. It is only when all actions are done in this spirit of moral imperative that man can experience genuine happiness and satisfaction.

Birth and *gunas*

The Vedas have laid down the basic regulations for the proper conduct of man. But these regulations are honoured more in the breach than in the observance. The first duty is to enquire into one's divine substance. The Divine is omnipresent and all-pervasive. The cosmos is permeated by the five basic vital elements. In the air we breathe, the water we drink or on the ground we tread on, there are innumerable microbial organisms which are destroyed. In such a situation, absolute non-violence is impracticable. What we should try to do is to avoid causing

any harm to any living being consciously and deliberately. This is *Ahimsa.* To observe this non-violence you have to cultivate the feeling that the One Supreme dwells in all beings. With this conviction there will be no tendency to cause harm to anyone.

Born as human beings, many tend to forget their true human qualities. It is not birth or form that determines the nature of a person, but his qualities. The lotus, for instance, grows out of the slush, but finds its place on the head of the Lord in a temple. It has earned this honour because of its qualifies. Likewise, we should develop our human qualities without regard to our birth or circumstance. The air we breathe or the water we drink knows no distinction of caste or community. The sky or fire has no such distinctions. Only the earth is marred by barriers and differences.

We may erect barriers around our little plot of land. But can these barriers be extended to the sky above? Or, to the air around? Why, then, cherish such narrow ideas which restrict our spiritual horizons? All the wealth we have, our positions, knowledge and power, are all transient and fleeting. Our life itself can end any moment. In this context it is utterly lamentable that we ruin our lives with likes and dislikes. The precious time that is given to us should not be wasted to the slightest extent.

Education and character

Youth to-day are leading undisciplined and meaningless lives. They are not adhering to any regulations and are lacking in reverence and gratitude. Even dogs have deep gratitude, but the young do not revere elders or evince gratitude towards their parents. Education is wasted on such a person. It may enable him to earn a living. But even street beggars without any education get money enough to live. Education is not necessary for mere livelihood. Even if you live for only three days, your life should be righteous and meaningful. Your conduct should be good and commendable. If a man does not behave righteously, his high position or rank has no meaning. If a man claims to be a great scholar but has few good qualities, what reputation can he have? Even an illiterate person, who has good qualities, can command respect. Degrees are turning the minds of persons towards wealth and office and not towards God. Character should be the primary purpose of education. An educated person should be respected for his conduct and qualities.

Neethi (ethics) is of paramount importance for anyone who calls himself a human being. It comprehends many qualities. It implies regard for society, reverence for the human personality, love for one's country, care for one's physical well-being; love for one's kith and kin and yearning for knowledge. These should be regarded as the five life-breaths for man. But these are hardly present today.

Foremost duty of a student

Love of one's country means being proud of the country's ancient culture and having the determination not to degrade it in any way. Love and gratitude to one's parents is the foremost duty of a student. For the misbehaviour of students today, parents are largely to blame. They do not exercise sufficient control over children. People celebrate the birth of children. But the real. celebration should be only when children have earned a good name and brought credit to their parents. Parents who do not bring up their children properly are unworthy of the role. Affection for children should not mean allowing them to go astray. Such parents are like Dhritarashtra, who allowed his children to have their way and ultimately faced wholesale disaster. The Mahabharatha says: "The unwise wail over the lack of children. But what happened to the

Kaurava king who had a hundred children? What good did they do to him? The sage Suka had no children. Did he experience any untoward fate? He was always in supreme bliss."

One's birth is the result of one's actions in previous lives. The divine gate-keepers of Lord Vishnu, Jaya and Vijaya, were born as demons on earth because of the curse of the sages Sanaka, Sanandana and others. They came under the curse because of the dominance of the *Rajo and Thamo gunas* in them which induced them to show disregard to the great sages. Despite the high position they enjoyed in the Divine Presence, they had not absorbed the moral values----humility and duty. Hence, they were cursed by the sages and took birth as *Rakshasas.*

Hiranyakasipu was the greatest among the *Rakshasas.* But his son, Prahlada, was the greatest devotee of God. How did this happen? It was because of the divine message which Prahlada imbibed from sage Narada. A *Rakshasa's* son became the greatest devotee of Vishnu. Those who had been nearest to Vishnu Jaya and Vijaya----were born as *Rakshasas!* Their moral qualities account for the difference. Likewise, if one born as a human displays demonic qualities, he is not a man, but a demon. If one who is born among *Rakshasas* has divine virtues, he is divine in nature and not a *Rakshasa.* Hence, whether one is good or bad should be judged by his qualities and not by his family affinities or form. Learn to lead a life of virtue for, without virtue, life has no meaning **at all.**

Lessons taught by the Vedas

Man has to be guided by the directives of the *Vedas.* Of the three *Vedas Rig, Yajur and Sama* the *Rig Veda* contains the essence of all the three. Its principal teaching is *Vinaya* and *Vidheyata* (humility and duty). The *Yajur Veda* enjoins the quality of *Dharana* (steadfastness). This means that whatever difficulties you may encounter, whatever hardship you experience, you should fulfill your duty with fortitude and forbearance. Through both these means you can develop your human qualities to the highest extent. The essential teaching of the *Sama Veda* is *Vignatha* (Propriety). This tells you how to conduct yourself with any person, how to behave towards elders and superiors, how to treat guests, how to approach God and what is the right behaviour in any situation. These three *Vedas (Trayee)* provide the basic rules for right living: *Vidheyata* (Devotion to duty); *dharana* (steadfastness) and *Vignata* (Propriety). The Love principle integrates all three guidelines laid down by the *Vedas.*

Sacred significance of number three

The sages compendiously described the *Vedas* as *Trayee. Trayee* means three. Three is a significant number with sacred associations. The human qualities are three in number: *Satwa, Rajas and Thamas.* Man's body is subject to ills from three sources: the head, the stomach and the feet. Three has a sacred significance in worship. In offering *bilva* leaves to Lord Siva the devotees describe Siva as having three qualities, three weapons and three eyes. Time also has three aspects---past, present and future. The chaos in the world today is due to people ignoring the present and either brooding over the past which is beyond recall, or speculating about the future, which is unpredictable. What people should be concerned about are their obligations in the present. Their foremost duty is to try to discover their inherent divinity and transform their lives, recognising that the Divine pervades everything in Creation.

The present is the product of the past and the future is the result of the present. Both the past and the future are contained in the present. Hence live in the present with good thoughts and good actions. Rid your heart of all bad feelings and make it pure and holy.

You may be confronted with many problems. Do not allow them to occupy your mind all the time. Have a time-table for all your daily activities. Set apart half an hour or an hour in the evening for thinking over your problems. You will be able to find solutions for them. If you worry about them all the time you will be wasting your time and not solving them.

Develop powers of discrimination

Once an opium addict came to me and expressed his immobility to get rid of the habit in spite of many efforts. Swami suggested to him to have a chalk of the size of the opium he used to take and each day write "Om" three times on a slate and take opium equal to the size of the chalk. As the chalk got reduced by writing, the quantity of opium consumed also got reduced from day to day and by the end of the month the chalk and the consumption of opium, got reduced to nothing. It is by such regular practice that one has to overcome bad habits.

Students should develop their powers of discrimination, to know what is right and what is wrong, what should be done and what should be avoided. They study a variety of subjects like Physics, Chemistry, etc., but there is one knowledge by knowing which they can know every thing else. This is knowledge of the Spirit. Spiritual knowledge is like bathing in the ocean, which is equivalent to bathing in all the different sacred rivers. Faith in self and Faith in God is the secret of greatness. One who has no faith in himself cannot develop faith in God.

Sankaracharya once told a disciple who came to him and said: *"Jagat Mithya"* (the world is unreal) that "if the world is unreal, you try to find out the truth about yourself, you will know the truth about everything." Sankaracharya told him: "You are not unreal. You are Bliss. You, however, think you are this body and this fickle mind. They are mutable and changing. Seek the consciousness that is unchanging and eternal. If you identify yourself with the body, you will fail to know the Reality. Learn to discriminate between what is permanent and what is transient. Use your *Buddhi* (intellect) and not give way to the caprices of the mind."

You are now in *Trayee Brindavan.* The three *Vedas* are in the Brindavan. Your heart is a Brindavan. It has three *gunas (Satwa, Rajas and Thamas).* To experience the Lord in the Brindavan of the heart is *Ananda* (Bliss). The three *gunas* have to be harmonised like the blades of the fan. When they revolve harmoniously, after you have turned on the switch of Discrimination and the current of sacred Love flows through the fan, you will experience the cool breeze of Bliss.

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